

SUSTAINABILITY TODAY

The challenge of change

I recently attended the [20th Annual Ceres conference](#) and came away with both a renewed feeling of urgency with regard to tackling sustainability issues, and a nagging sense that we're going about this all wrong.

The problem? We're working away at the edges, when what we need is broad, systemic, and near-immediate change. We need to facilitate a rapid transition from our entrenched habits and lifestyles to a new reality and way of being. So although the conference roster was impressive, I felt that we weren't hearing anything new. Where were the psychologists or cultural anthropologists who could help us identify effective drivers for change and cross the sustainability divide?

We need more of this type of guidance and prodding, because humans are notoriously bad at change. The mere fact of knowing the benefits of, say, installing programmable thermostats or low-flow shower heads is hardly sufficient to spur action, especially given the other demands of work, family, and the mundane challenges of daily existence. And that's without even considering the extraordinary stresses many people are experiencing in a declining economy: job loss, foreclosure, loss of health coverage, and so on. It's no wonder that the environment still ranks near the bottom in polls looking at issues of public concern.

The *New York Times Magazine* explored this very problem in its "Green

Issue" ("[Why Isn't the Brain Green?](#)"). Unfortunately, we can't draw too many conclusions yet, as research relating to behavior change *vis à vis* environmental challenges is in an early state of play. So where does that leave us?

Two thoughts:

- We need to make sustainability easy (a "no-brainer", in effect). If we can shape social and business frameworks so that the sustainable choice is the default option, we're halfway there. I loved one example from the Ceres conference breakout on water issues where a speaker suggested that it would be more economical for the State of California to literally come into people's homes and replace their toilets with low-flow units rather than invest in other, more expensive, water-conservation initiatives throughout the State. Another example is of stores phasing out plastic bags... now that wasn't so hard, was it?
- The recent US presidential election unequivocally demonstrated the power of new media to leverage grass-roots organization and social networking to achieve broad, systemic change (see the recent article in *Fast Company* for a "[behind the scenes](#)" look). Surely we could apply the same concept and tools to organizing for sustainability.

Any takers? [We'd love to hear from you.](#)

- Aleksandra Dobkowski-Joy

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Reporting in a Recession

In this [article](#), **Kathee Rebernak of Framework:CR** explores some of the compelling reasons to stay focused on transparency in the face of poor economic conditions.

Learning from Leaders

The [2009 Innovations Review](#), issued by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), highlights key environmental innovations in business. The Review extends EDF's efforts to promote the sharing of best practices among companies and NGOs.

Improving investor communications

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has released a [report](#) that identifies ways companies can explicitly link their environmental, social, and governance performance to business strategy—and thus gain the attention of mainstream investors.

Assuring consumers in a downturn

AccountAbility has issued the [fifth report](#) in their "What Assures?" series. The study examines consumer trust in corporations. Among the findings: there is considerable public skepticism on whether regulators are up to the task of policing ethical corporate behavior.

REPORT REVIEWS

Each month, we evaluate a corporate responsibility report for [Ethical Corporation](#) magazine. Click on the following links to read our most recent reviews:

- > [ANZ Corporate Responsibility Review 2008](#)
- > [Cadbury 2007-08 Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Review](#)

Sustainability webinars with the Altamont Group

Framework:CR's Spring collaboration with the Altamont Group featured star billing for Principals Kathee Rebernak and Aleksandra Dobkowski-Joy in the [Sustainability 2009 Series](#).

Framework presented 90-minute webinars on sustainability strategy and sustainability reporting. For both topics, the sessions covered trends and stakeholder expectations, best practice examples and case studies, and an in-depth look at process requirements.

If you missed the webinars and would like to order CD replays, please contact Jeffrey Brown at the Altamont Group at jbrown@altamont-group.com.

To arrange for a private webinar for your organization, please contact Aleksandra Dobkowski-Joy at adjoy@frameworkcr.com.

Partnership with the Yale Center for Business and the Environment

In our continuing partnership with the Yale Center for Business and the Environment, Framework facilitated a project between Nestlé Waters North America and a group of three Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies students during the spring 2009 semester. The project focused on packaging, marketing, and distribution strategies for a cause-related bottled water brand that will relaunch this fall.

For more information on this partnership, or to inquire about participating in future projects, please contact Kyle Whitaker at kwhitaker@frameworkcr.com.

Framework:CR clients win Ceres-ACCA reporting awards

Two Framework:CR clients were recently honored with [Ceres-ACCA North American reporting awards](#), presented in mid-April at the 2008 Ceres conference in San Francisco, California.

[Symantec](#) was named a co-winner in the best first-time report category. The company was recognized for the report's materiality analysis; the use of new media such as podcasts, videos, and blogs to supplement report content; and ease of navigation between the printed report and online content.

[Seventh Generation](#) took home the prize for best SME reporter, and was commended for its discussion of a "sustainable and restorative" business model, its in-depth look at product stewardship, and its use of multiple channels to reach various stakeholders.

The reports were selected out of a field of 97 entrants. The judging panel rated each submission on three criteria:

completeness, including materiality, stakeholder inclusion, strategic integration, and organizational context; **credibility**, including management processes, stakeholder inclusion, governance, performance data, and assurance; and **communication**, including presentation, accessibility, and structure.

STANDARDS UPDATE

GRI developing new sector supplements

The GRI is in the process of developing various new sector supplements, including reporting guidance for the construction and real estate and media sectors. Please contact miles@globalreporting.org or visit the [website](#) for more information.

Insurers must disclose climate risk

Insurance regulators have instituted a [mandatory requirement](#) that insurance companies disclose both the financial risks of climate change and the strategies they have adopted in response to climate risk. The measure passed after intense advocacy by Ceres and may [presage additional action by the SEC](#) to require all companies to disclose climate-related risks.

Climate reporting plan proposed by US EPA

The US Environmental Protection Agency has proposed [new mandatory greenhouse gas reporting requirements](#) for businesses that emit more than 25,000 tonnes per year. The proposed rule is open for comment until June 9, 2009.

Companies must work harder to apply UNGC principles

The [2008 Annual Review](#) released by the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) reveals that companies still do not adequately integrate sustainability into daily operations. The majority of UNGC signatories also do not require suppliers to join the UNGC. On a positive note, the UNGC continues to attract new members who pledge to uphold the 10 UNGC principles.

